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Title

Demonstrations of pedagogical content knowledge: Spanish Liberal Arts and Spanish Education majors' writing

Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/9t09n5x9>

Journal

L2 Journal, 2(1)

Authors

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Publication Date

2010

DOI

10.5070/L2219059

Peer reviewed

Demonstrations of pedagogical content knowledge: Spanish Liberal Arts and Spanish Education majors' writing

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Second language teachers' pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) is a sophisticated combination of pedagogical and content knowledge. This study explores the acquisition and articulation of PCK, highlighting the question of whether teacher education programs add to language teachers' knowledge base. Data was gathered using a performance assessment that incorporated teacher writing tasks in Spanish with a reflective paragraph to explain decisions made while writing. Areas of interest were language awareness, knowledge of effective teaching, and knowledge of learners. The study's primary purpose is to reveal whether PCK differed in preservice Spanish teachers' writing, as compared to Spanish Liberal Arts majors' writing. Qualitative analysis revealed differing stages of PCK between the groups, suggesting teacher education's influence on the preservice teachers' performance.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher knowledge is a rich area of investigation (e.g., Freeman & Johnson, 1998; Nespor & Barylske, 1991; Verloop, Van Driel & Mijer, 2002; Webb & Blond, 1995). One of the longest standing constructs of teacher knowledge is Shulman's (1987) multifaceted model that includes pedagogical knowledge, content knowledge, and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK), among other categories. Pedagogical knowledge includes the "how" of teaching, generally acquired through education coursework and experiences in the schools (Ball, 2000). Content knowledge, on the other hand, is the "what" of teaching or the "subject-matter knowledge" (Lafayette, 1993).

The focus of the present study is PCK, which Shulman (1987) called "that special amalgam of content and pedagogy that is uniquely the province of teachers, their own special form of professional understanding" (p. 8). It is a sophisticated hybrid of pedagogical and content knowledge (Freeman, 2002) and has been a topic of political and intellectual discussion since before the development of normal schools and teachers' colleges (Bullough, 2001). Although many scholars have explored PCK (e.g., Ball, 2000; Grossman, 1989; Munby, Russell, & Martin, 2001), Cochran, DeRuiter, and King's (1993) definition most informs this study:

The transformation of subject matter for teaching (Shulman, 1986) occurs as the teacher *critically reflects* on and *interprets* the subject matter; finds multiple ways to *represent* the information as analogies, metaphors, examples, problems, demonstrations, and

classroom activities; *adapts* the material to students' abilities, gender, prior knowledge, and preconceptions (those preinstructional informal, or nontraditional ideas students bring to the learning setting); and finally *tailors* the material to those specific students to whom the information will be taught. (emphasis in original, p. 264)

This sophisticated definition accounts for the active decision-making process in which teachers engage on a daily basis.

Potential sources of PCK are numerous: observations as a student, practical classroom experiences, and teacher education coursework. Teacher education's effect on teacher knowledge remains unclear; since the beginning of the 20th century, questions about its value have circulated within the American political arena and even within colleges and universities (Bullough, 2001).

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

Historical background

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education released a report on educational reform that fueled the debate about the effectiveness of teacher education by suggesting that education programs pay greater attention to content areas than pedagogical coursework. Major reforms to teacher education were later proposed by powerful entities, such as the Holmes group (1986) and the U.S. Department of Education under former President Bush (2002). Indicative of today's political climate, current U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, recently spoke at Teachers College at Columbia University and claimed that "many if not most of the nation's 1,450 schools, colleges, and departments of education are doing a mediocre job of preparing teachers for the realities of the 21st century classroom" (U.S. Department of Education, 2009).

More recent discussion centers on the contention that strong preparation in subject knowledge and enthusiasm are sufficient to begin a successful teaching career. Former U.S. Secretary of Education Rod Paige argued in *Meeting the highly qualified teachers challenge: The Secretary's annual report on teacher quality* (U.S. Department of Education, 2002) that "there is little evidence that education school coursework leads to improved student achievement" (p. 19). He further proposed that required education coursework be eliminated and that colleges of education be made optional (U.S. Department of Education, 2002). Richardson (1996) voiced similar concerns with doubts that teacher education programs change pre-existing beliefs since they are "sandwiched between two powerful forces--previous life history, particularly related to that of being a student, and classroom experience as a student-teacher and teacher" (p. 113).

Debate over teacher education's effectiveness extends to more recent legislation as well. The latest reauthorization of the Higher Education Act established an Adjunct Teacher Corps "to encourage well-qualified math, science, and critical language professionals to become adjunct secondary school teachers" (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). The same Act grants specific support for an alternative licensure program, Teach for America. While the Act provides for continued professional development for second career teachers and recent college graduates, there is no specific mention of education coursework.

State-level legislators and Departments of Education also play an important part in the education of prospective teachers. Those decision-makers heavily influence what classes and assessments are necessary for teachers to be licensed and which Colleges of Education are to be accredited. As an example, Virginia recently restructured teacher education requirements to include fewer education courses and more content courses (Virginia Department of Education, 2007).

Teacher education supporters argue that subject matter knowledge is simply not enough to be successful in the classroom (Darling-Hammond & Youngs, 2002) and that coursework in pedagogy, as well as the subject matter area, is a necessary part of teacher education. Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and William (2004) contend that:

a high level of qualification in a subject is less important than a thorough understanding of its fundamental principles, an understanding of the kinds of difficulties that students might have, and the creativity to be able to think up questions that stimulate productive thinking. Furthermore, such pedagogical content knowledge is essential in interpreting [student] responses. (p. 17)

Proponents of teacher education argue that courses in pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge can foster this sophisticated understanding of teaching. Darling-Hammond (2000) highlights PCK development in teacher education as a way to enhance “teachers’ abilities to examine teaching from the perspective of learners who bring diverse experiences and frames of reference to the classroom” (p. 166). That “ability to see beyond one’s own perspective” and “to put oneself in the shoes of the learner” (p. 170) is at the heart of PCK and is cultivated in teacher education coursework.

The American educational landscape will undoubtedly change as President Obama’s and Secretary Duncan’s terms continue, but it is certain that teacher education’s influence on teacher knowledge and performance will persist as a vital area of research.

Second language (L2) teacher PCK

Shulman's model of teacher knowledge has been applied to L2 teacher preparation (Shulman 1986, 1987). Wing (1993) contends that pedagogical knowledge derives from formal instruction in coursework, such as educational psychology and second language acquisition, and from teaching experiences in elementary and secondary classrooms. Lafayette (1993) called content knowledge the “specialist component” of foreign language teacher education, which “consists of proficiency in and knowledge about the language and culture to be taught” (p. 124). It includes the areas of “culture, language, linguistics, and literature” (p. 124). As in other content areas, neither pedagogical knowledge nor content knowledge alone is sufficient for effective L2 teaching.

PCK is central to L2 teaching since the content is typically the medium of instruction, and language teachers actively use the target language while simultaneously modeling speaking and writing skills to students. Johnston and Goettsch (2000) posit that “language teaching is first and foremost an educational enterprise, not a linguistic one” (p. 439). In a sense, L2 teachers have the unique ability to tailor their linguistic output to serve both linguistic and pedagogical ends. Freeman and Johnson (1998) point out that the “core of the new knowledge-base must focus on the activity of teaching itself; it should center on the teacher who does it, the contexts in which it is done, and pedagogy by which it is done” (p.

397). This situated application of teacher knowledge to a specific classroom is the essence of PCK.

Interestingly, a high level of target language proficiency does not necessarily indicate L2 teaching ability. Andrews' (2001) construct of teacher language awareness, a subset of PCK in his model, highlights the uniqueness of language teaching and how the "content and medium of instruction are inextricably intertwined" (p. 77). Wing (1993) explains the counter-intuitive nature of teacher language use, saying that L2 teachers

must demonstrate an acceptable level of proficiency in the target language..., know how learners learn a foreign language in the classroom setting, and be able to choose from a basic set of strategies, techniques, and activities those that will create an appropriate learning environment for their particular students. (p. 178)

Her explanation of L2 teacher language use suggests that a wide variety of knowledge bases inform L2 teaching.

In a study of "good language teachers" and their knowledge of language, Andrews and McNeill (2005) found that for each participant in their study "content issues form[ed] the core of their thinking, planning, and teaching " (p. 170). In other words, PCK is ultimately "the 'application' of knowledge about language" (Johnston & Goettsch, 2000, p. 440) that teachers convey as they instruct their students.

The complexity of language teacher proficiency cannot be denied. Spanish teachers, for example, are expected to produce the Advanced-Low level of language proficiency recommended by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (Foreign Language Teacher Standards Writing Team, 2002). At the same time, however, teaching is a special task that requires language users to tailor their level of language to their students and demonstrate awareness of learners' interlanguage. Elder (2001) tells us that there may be

a fundamental incompatibility between the traditional notion of general proficiency in a context which assumes a developmental continuum involving an increase in range and complexity of the language use across situations where features of strategic competence such as simplicity, clarity and sensitivity to audience may be valued over and above elaborateness. (p. 162)

Therefore, attention to audience means that a teacher's level of discourse must conform to what language learners can comprehend, although the teacher may be capable of more sophisticated discourse. While determining an appropriate level of language, teachers must also simultaneously understand "input enhancement" or the ability "to make salient within the input the key features of the language" and enable students to pick up on those features within communication events (Andrews & McNeill, 2005, p. 172). The ultimate goal is for learners to intake the language through the teacher-crafted input. PCK in L2 learning and teaching is a sophisticated combination of pedagogical and content knowledge that is manifested in a teacher's language use and reflections on that use (Schön, 1983; Mok, 1994).

Acquiring PCK

L2 teacher PCK is formed through a combination of pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge; how teachers acquire this important component of professional knowledge

necessitates additional exploration. A "continuum of teacher learning" (Feinman-Nemser, 2001) and PCK emerges, beginning with an individual's experiences as a student, developing during preservice experiences, and evolving throughout the teaching career. The way that L2 teachers were taught greatly influences how they later teach, and L2 teacher preparation begins when future teachers first step into the classroom as young learners (Wing, 1993). During that "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), preservice teachers begin to form beliefs about how L2s are learned and should be taught. Later, as they begin a L2 teaching career, they draw on those early observations and experiences to formulate teaching beliefs (Bailey, Bergthold, Braunstein, Fleischman, Holbrook, Tuman, Waissbluth, & Zambo, 1996; Borg, 1994, 2005; Calderhead & Robinson, 1991; Mullock, 2006). Other experiences, such as practica in schools and student teaching, further expand their PCK (Munby et al., 2001). Cochran et al. (1993) point out that "PCK develops over time as a result of experience in many classroom settings with many students" (p. 264-265). Acquisition of PCK begins early and continues to evolve through informal observations and professional experiences. That content-specific pedagogical development is necessary to prepare effective teachers (Cochran et al., 1993; Watzke, 2007).

Teacher education can influence preservice L2 teacher knowledge. Theoretically, PCK develops as preservice teachers take education courses that inform their L2 teaching beliefs and practices. The effect of teacher education on teacher development, however, is a contentious issue, as mentioned above. Given the divergent beliefs about the role of teacher education, studies of its influence on teacher knowledge are imperative. Is there a difference in PCK between those educated solely in content and those educated in pedagogy as well as content? Few scholars have explored how "PCK differentiates *expert teachers in a subject area* from *subject area experts*" (emphasis in original, Cochran et al., 1993, p. 263). Grossman (1989) investigated the development of in-service English teachers' PCK, comparing teachers who completed English teacher education programs and teachers who completed English content courses without pedagogical emphasis. The English LA majors, who did not have teacher education coursework, "found it difficult to re-think their subject matter for teaching" (p. 30). Frameworks for understanding student learning and misunderstandings were presented in pre-professional education courses, and teachers unfamiliar with those frameworks had difficulty interpreting and organizing insights about student understanding. Grossman's study demonstrated the development of PCK through university coursework in education and the advantage for those who completed that coursework.

These findings are not consistent across all studies comparing the performance of those prepared to teach content to the performance of those who are prepared solely in content. Elder, Iwashta, and Brown (1995) found that Japanese generalists outperformed expert teachers of Japanese on a test specifically designed to measure language proficiency of teachers of Japanese in Australia. They are careful to point out, however, that the difference in performance may reveal more the inadequacies of the research design than a lack of PCK among the teachers included in the study.

The conflicting results of the preceding studies prompt further investigation of PCK development and the differences in performance between those educated solely in content and those educated in content and pedagogy. Teacher education has been shown to affect teacher performance positively in some instances, although not all. The collection of more conclusive evidence is a necessary step, and a comparative assessment of PCK between those who have had teacher education courses and those who have not is one way to provide that evidence.

THE PRESENT STUDY

This study investigates the effect of teacher education on Spanish majors at a large, Midwestern university. It compares the varying presence of PCK between Spanish Education majors and Spanish Liberal Arts (LA) majors, focusing on their teacher writing. We address the following research questions:

1. How does the performance of Spanish Education majors differ from the performance of Spanish LA majors in an assessment of Spanish teacher writing?
2. How do Spanish Education majors and Spanish LA majors demonstrate PCK in a performance assessment of Spanish teacher writing?

A focus on writing

Valdés, Haro and Echevarriarza (1992) state that “most FL professionals have taken the position that writing is a ‘secondary’ or less crucial skill than listening, speaking, and reading” (p. 333). Supporting that contention, many existing teacher assessments (e.g., Praxis II exams) fail to address L2 teacher writing abilities. To compensate, some states such as Connecticut (Bureau of Educator Standards and Certification, 2009) require preservice FL teachers to take the ACTFL Proficiency Writing Test, an assessment aligned with the ACTFL Proficiency Guidelines for Writing (American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages, 2001). That assessment, however, focuses on the teachers’ general writing skills and not those specific to L2 teaching. Grant argues that L2 “teachers should be evaluated for their abilities to use the kind of language they will need to control in the classroom” (1997, p. 38). In general, writing in relation to PCK remains an overlooked area of investigation, and L2 teachers’ classroom writing continues to be an underappreciated component of teachers’ knowledge.

L2 teachers need to be able to use spoken and written language effectively inside and outside of the classroom (Grant, 1997, p. 38). On a weekly basis, teachers write tests, handouts, and comments that often blend into the background of a lesson. This written input is crucial to L2 learners as it serves as a model for their own production (Krashen, 1985). Teachers need to be precise in their writing since their written artifacts are produced for the purposes of student learning and evaluation. In light of this observation, L2 teacher writing is the focus of this study on PCK.

It should be noted that while all components of L2 teachers’ content knowledge are worthy of investigation, this study focuses primarily on the language portion. This is in no way meant to diminish the importance of linguistics, literature, or culture. The authors agree that cultural knowledge and the teaching of culture in the foreign language classroom are imperative. However, this study was designed specifically to examine preservice teachers’ and Spanish LA majors’ PCK within their writing for the classroom.

Needs analysis

This study’s performance assessment was designed to make inferences about preservice teachers’ ability to write in Spanish in future jobs in public and private high schools in Iowa. Although the range of language teacher discourse is potentially “infinite” (Elder, 2001, p. 154), we used a needs analysis that limited the types of “test tasks and content that are

authentically representative of the target situation” (Douglas, 2000, p. 46). Before designing the tasks, we gathered information about the content and frequency of Spanish teachers’ writing in the classroom. Thirty-two high school Spanish teachers in the state completed a survey about the nature of their L2 writing tasks and the frequency with which they carried out those tasks. The teachers came from diverse school districts in the state, taught various levels, and represented several stages of teaching experience. The following, in order of frequency, were the most commonly reported teacher writing tasks in Spanish: a) writing on the chalkboard, b) writing worksheets, c) writing test questions, and d) writing comments on student papers.

Writing on the chalkboard was eliminated as a task due to the inability to simulate classroom practice in the assessment; that task is often done in response to students’ immediate needs and would be difficult to reproduce. Grant (1997) divided teacher language proficiency into two parts, spontaneous and planned. In a classroom, a writing task performed on a chalkboard is generally more spontaneous, whereas the other three tasks are more planned.

The task

A detailed scenario of a hypothetical teaching situation was provided to the participants in the preface of the task, along with a chapter on travel from a second-year high school textbook. Demographics of the school and class, individual students’ characteristics and potential motivations were outlined for the participants as well. Providing “sufficient information about the context for and the goals of teaching decisions” allowed for a more authentic performance assessment (Darling-Hammond, Wise, & Klein, 1999, p. 52).

Participants in the study were asked to perform the most common Spanish teacher writing tasks: worksheets, test questions, and comments on student papers (see Table 1). Each item had two parts. Participants wrote at least five sentences in Spanish in the first part, which was scored based on language awareness (Andrews, 2001) and pedagogical considerations, such as knowledge of teaching and knowledge of learners. In the second part, participants wrote five sentences in Spanish or English, reflecting on decisions made in the first part of each task. They were asked to explicitly address how their responses demonstrated knowledge of learners and effective teaching. The reflection was added for participants to explain their thought process and reasoning in relation to the first part (Pak, 1986; Schön, 1983). The second part was scored only on pedagogical considerations, not on language awareness.

<i>Task</i>	<i>Detailed Description of Task</i>
Writing a worksheet	<p>You are preparing a worksheet on direct object pronouns to hand out to your class. The worksheet will contain one exercise in the form of a dialogue. The dialogue must contain five full sentences in Spanish. The speakers, Marta and Juan, are preparing for a trip. Be sure to provide an appropriate answer that corresponds to the overall theme of this test.</p> <p>Here is an example of a possible dialogue. This example consists of two full sentences.</p> <p>Marta: Did you pack my shirt?</p>

	<p>Juan: Yes, I packed _____.</p>
Writing a test task	<p>You are writing the composition section of a chapter test. Write five consecutive sentences to begin a diary entry that each student will complete by adding five more sentences as if it were his/her own diary. The diary entry should detail the horrendous morning that she/he has spent at the airport preparing for a trip abroad to a Spanish speaking country. The diary entry should describe this frustrating experience using the present and preterite only. Use verbs from the chapter vocabulary list provided. Be sure to provide an appropriate answer that corresponds to the overall theme of this test.</p> <p>Write five full consecutive sentences in Spanish to begin a diary entry for your students. Remember to leave opportunity for students to complete the diary entry on the exam.</p>
Writing comments on student work	<p>It is nearing the end of the school year and you have just collected a first draft of a composition. Since this is a first draft, you want to provide comments about content, organization, and vocabulary. Additionally, you want to recognize the personal interests of each student. Below are two compositions from your class. (See page 10 for translations of student compositions, if needed.) Read the details about each student and the compositions that they have written. Write 5 full sentences of helpful comments to each student for future drafts. You should not correct grammar and you DO NOT have to put a number or letter grade on the composition.</p> <p>Assignment description:</p> <p>Escribe acerca de las vacaciones de primavera. Incluye lo que hiciste y con quién.</p> <p>Asegúrate de demostrar lo que comprendes sobre el pretérito e imperfecto.</p> <p>Feedback rubric:</p> <p>Vocabulary (varied vocabulary)</p> <p>Organization (well-organized paragraphs, use of clear topic and summary sentences, convincing, easy to follow)</p> <p>Content (significant, interesting, appropriate, well thought out, appropriate to assignment)</p> <p>Personalized comments (different comments for each student based on student interests and background)</p> <p>Write five full sentences of feedback in Spanish to each of the students based on the above criteria.</p>
Reflection in Spanish or English (following each task)	<p>Reflect in English or in Spanish on what you have written. Explain why you wrote what you did, decisions you made, and how your response demonstrates knowledge of learners and effective teaching.</p>

Write five full sentences in English or in Spanish to explain your pedagogical choices in writing [the task].

Table 1. Description of Performance Assessment

Task Administration

Eighteen participants took part in this study; half were candidates for Spanish secondary teacher licensure and the other half were Spanish LA majors at a public research university in Iowa (see Table 2). All had taken or tested out of the initial four semesters of college-level Spanish or were native speakers of Spanish. Of the nine preservice teachers, eight were female and one was male. This group, ranging in age from 20 to 29 years old, was composed of undergraduate degree candidates and master's degree candidates in the foreign language education program. Two of the candidates were native speakers of Spanish from Spain and five had studied abroad in a Spanish-speaking country. A wide variety of study abroad experiences were noted, ranging from two weeks to one year, with most having studied in Spain. These preservice teachers had taken between zero and sixteen advanced Spanish courses; they had also taken between three and ten education courses which included at least one course in L2 methodology and one clinical experience.

Of the nine undergraduate Spanish LA majors, four were male and five were female, ranging in age from 20 to over 40 years old. Six had traveled to a Spanish-speaking country and one was a native speaker of Spanish from Colombia. None of the Spanish LA participants had experience teaching Spanish at the K-12 level, nor had any of them taken education coursework. They had taken from two to eleven Spanish courses beyond the intermediate level.

All participants were given one hour to complete the task, which was administered in the first weeks of the semester. To the best of the authors' knowledge, none of the participants had received previous explicit instruction about how to construct the three types of items on the performance assessment. Participants' general characteristics are summarized in Table 2. (For clarification, Mj. before a name identifies a Spanish LA major, and Tr. identifies a Spanish Education major.)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Number of Spanish classes completed</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Native speaker status</i>
Mj. David	2	Male	NNS
Mj. Felipe	2	Male	NS
Mj. Sally	3	Female	NNS
Mj. John	11	Male	NNS
Mj. Ryan	5	Male	NNS
Mj. Ellen	10	Female	NNS

Mj. Angie	12	Female	NNS
Mj. Lia	10	Female	NNS
Mj. Shelley	3	Female	NNS
<i>Name</i>	<i>Number of Spanish/ education classes completed</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Native speaker status</i>
Tr. Julie	10/7	Female	NNS
Tr. Bev	16/8	Female	NNS
Tr. Carmen	7/3	Female	NS
Tr. Jill	12/8	Female	NNS
Tr. Betsy	4/7	Female	NNS
Tr. Janet	9/10	Female	NNS
Tr. Leslie	8/8	Female	NNS
Tr. María	0/10	Female	NS
Tr. Chris	9/8	Male	NNS

Table 2. Participant characteristics

ANALYSIS

To begin the analysis, we individually reviewed each participant's responses to the tasks and the accompanying reflections. At the time, one of us had prior experience in teacher education and one did not. Three general categories formed the initial structure for analysis: language awareness, knowledge of effective teaching, and knowledge of learners (see Table 3). After our individual reviews, we compared perceptions and considered how to categorize instances from the data into the three general categories. For example, whether or not a participant's response to the worksheet task addressed only direct object pronouns, as instructed in the prompt, differentiated between a successful and unsuccessful performance on the task. Among the three general categories, this difference in focus, we felt, fit best into the "knowledge of effective teaching" category.

Subcategories emerged based on commonalities and differences across participant responses. We further refined the subcategories based on the formal guidelines for teacher preparation and assessment, such as the National Council on the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) Standards (Foreign Language Teacher Standards Writing Team, 2002) and the Interstate New Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (INTASC) Standards (2002), as well as existing definitions of PCK. To continue the direct object pronoun example above, we further differentiated the general categories by noting occurrences

throughout the entire data set. For example, "focus on task" was not only noted in the worksheet task but also in the student feedback task. These commonalities influenced our classification of subcategories.

Finally, we reviewed a portion of the entire data set together as a means of enhancing trustworthiness and strengthening the development of the coding. When differences in the researchers' interpretations occurred, another teacher educator was consulted. An initial sample of 20 percent of the data (two Spanish Education majors' and two Spanish LA majors' responses to all items) were analyzed to clarify definitions, delete irrelevant categories, and further refine the coding scheme. With the coding structure more solidified, we coded the remaining responses individually with a complete and consistently applied coding system.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Language Awareness:	
Appropriate tense	Ability to select appropriate tenses based on students' knowledge /interlanguage and scope/sequence of instruction (regular -AR verbs in the preterit tense; verbs in the present tense)
Appropriate age/audience	Awareness of audience and learners' interlanguage development
Grammatical competence	Knowledge of rules of morphology, syntax, sentence-grammar semantics, and accuracy (use of preterite)
Use of target language	Ability to maintain use of Spanish and avoid English or Spanglish (a combination of Spanish and English)
Knowledge of Effective Teaching:	
Opportunities to practice	Ability to maximize opportunities for student practice of the content
Variety of responses	Ability to elicit a variety of responses that highlight nature of grammatical content (e.g. attention to placement, agreement, number, gender, etc.)
Focus on task	Ability to incorporate and maintain task objectives
Assessment	Knowledge of effective feedback process
Knowledge of Learners:	
Addressing students	Ability to address individual learning styles and needs of students

Affective issues

Ability to consider affective needs of students (e.g., feelings, preferences, values)

Table 3. Emergent Categories and Definitions

FINDINGS

Language Awareness

Language awareness, as defined by Thornbury (1997), is “the knowledge that teachers have of the underlying systems of the language that enables them to teach effectively” (p. x). In 2005, Andrews and McNeill expanded this definition to include awareness of the learners’ developing interlanguage. In this study, language awareness was apparent in three ways, demonstrating differences between the two groups. The type of language (e.g., verb tenses) that the participants used in the assessment was salient, with some participants choosing a level of linguistic sophistication that surpassed most high school Spanish students in their second year of study. Second, differences were noted in the appropriateness of vocabulary for the task; specifically, some participants used expletives or vocabulary that was too advanced for the student audience based on the context provided to participants. Finally, code-switching and the use of Spanglish were of interest. Code-switching is the use of the target language and the first language.

The first difference in performance concerned the level of the language used. Mj. David provided a dialogue for task one, the worksheet to practice direct object pronouns. In his worksheet, he used the future tense, which was too advanced for students in their second year of high school study. Additionally, he incorporated vocabulary that would be inappropriate for a secondary language classroom, including obscenities, into the activity. While cursing may be appropriate to the task in real life, classroom culture in the United States restricts its usage. It is also interesting to note that Mj. David did not include blanks for students to practice pronouns, the topic of grammatical study. Although he was provided an example, his performance demonstrated a misunderstanding of a worksheet’s purpose.

Marta: ¿Ud. Trajó los boletos y los pasaportes, sí?

Juan: Sí, sí... tranquila Marta. Los dos están en las maletas.

Marta: Debemos irnos a la puerta y sacar las tarjetas de embarque.

Juan: No Marta, todavía queda una hora hasta que despegue el avión.

Marta: Entiendo Juan, pero todavía tenemos que pasarnos por la seguridad y nunca se sale cuales demoras tendremos.

Juan: ¡Hijo de puta, Marta... Ud. Me mantiene loco! Bueno vamos para la puerta.¹

(Marta: You brought the tickets and passports, right?

Juan: Yes, yes... Calm down, Marta. Both are in the suitcases.

Marta: We should go to the gate and get out the boarding passes.

Juan: No, Marta, we still have an hour until the plane takes off.

Marta: I understand, Juan, but we still have to go through security and you never know what delays we will have.

Juan: Son of a bitch, Marta! You make me crazy. Fine, let's go to the gate.)

In task two, writing the beginning of an essay for students to finish, Mj. Felipe also used language that was too complex for the learners in this context. A native speaker of Spanish, he used the imperfect subjunctive and word choices (in bold below) that went beyond the level of the students.

*Al empacar mis maletas en mi casa, creía que no iba a tener problemas, pero resultó que para el agente de viajes es mucho peso, y me tocó pagar multa por sobre peso. Al entregárselas al maletero para que me las **llevara**, cerca de la puerta de embarque, olvidé cogerlas todas, y una se me ha perdido. No sé que voy hacer por que el vuelo sale en 5 minutos. Me han dicho que apenas aterrice, tengo que tener cuidado con dejar cosas **descuidadas** porque dicen que hay muchas personas que aprovechan para robar, tengo mucho miedo y ya me estoy **arrepintiendo** de este viaje.*

(While packing my bags at my house, I believed that I wasn't going to have any problems, but it turns out that it was too heavy for the travel agent, and I had to pay a fine for excessive weight. Upon giving them to the bagman so that he could carry them for me, close to the boarding gate, I forgot to gather all of them and one of them got lost. I don't know what I am going to do because the flight leaves in 5 minutes. They have told me that upon landing, I have to be careful leaving things because they say there are many people who take advantage and steal, I am very afraid and I am already regretting this trip.)

In general, the preservice teachers did not have such difficulties with appropriate language. They tended to focus on the language skill of interest, direct object pronouns. They also used language appropriate for the secondary classroom and recycled previously learned grammar points that were noted in the detailed scenario provided to the participants in the task, such as the preterite.. Tr. Carmen, a native-speaker of Spanish, wrote:

Primero llegué una hora tarde al aeropuerto. Después de llegar una hora tarde, hice cola por una hora más porque había pocas personas trabajando en el aeropuerto. Facturé el equipaje y subí al avión. Me abroché el cinturón pero....(continuar)

(First, I arrived an hour late to the airport. After arriving an hour late, I waited in line for another hour because there were very few people working at the airport. I checked my bag and boarded the plane. I buckled my seatbelt but...(continue))

The preservice teachers' performance suggests that they understood how to enhance the input given to students (Andrews & McNeill, 2005). At the same time, this performance also demonstrates an awareness of learners' challenges and limitations. As seen in Tr. Carmen's task above, discourse markers were used to note the timing of the events and textual repetition was added to facilitate student comprehension. On closer examination, seven of the nine Spanish Education majors used repetition in this task, whereas only two of

nine Spanish LA majors used repetition to aid understanding. All participants used at least one discourse marker to aid the chronology of the narration.

In addition to not fully grasping the notion of providing rich level-appropriate input, the Spanish LA majors tended to use more English while completing the writing tasks. For example, task three required feedback on student-produced compositions in Spanish, but Mj. Sally included much Spanglish in her feedback (in bold below). An example follows:

*Es posible organizar el composicion diferente. Los ideas son buenos, **pero put las mismas ideas together.***

*El hice mucho en su tiempo y es posible **expañar en su topico.** Me gusta que usó mucho vocabulario diferente.*

(It is possible to organize the essay differently. The ideas are good, but put the same ideas together.

He did a lot during his time and it is possible to expand (?) the topic. I like that he used a lot of different vocabulary.)

In addition, three Spanish LA majors (Mjs. David, Shelley and Ryan) wrote only in English for the composition feedback task. In contrast, all nine preservice teachers wrote in Spanish and at a level appropriate to secondary students. This can be seen in an example from Tr. Betsy's feedback to a student composition:

La organización de ésta composición es un poco desorganizado. ¿Es posible que puedas organizar los pensamientos un poco, antes de escribir? Parece que te divertiste durante las vacaciones. ¡Creo que hiciste mucho y también trabajaste mucho! Buena suerte en la Universidad.

(The organization of this essay is a bit disorganized. Is it possible that you can organize the ideas a bit, before writing? It seems that you had fun during the vacation. I believe you did a lot and also that you worked a lot! Good luck at the university.)

As our analysis of data illustrated, there were a number of differences noted in the area of language awareness between Spanish Education majors and the Spanish LA majors in this study; however, there was one commonality found as well. In general, both groups had comparable grammatical competence and committed similar grammatical errors, such as errors in preterite versus imperfect, noun-adjective agreement, and subject-verb agreement. This commonality in errors suggests that their grammatical competence was at similar levels.

Knowledge of effective teaching

Thus far, our discussion has focused on language awareness in the participants' performance. Pedagogical features also differed between Spanish Education and Spanish LA majors' writing. Effective L2 teaching requires that students have opportunities to demonstrate knowledge of a variety of linguistic features and that teachers use a variety of strategies, techniques, and methods for teaching (INTASC Foreign Language Standards Committee, 2002). Three components emerged within the category of knowledge of effective teaching. First, participants needed to consider the task at hand and design the format of the task appropriately. Second, they needed to provide a purposeful representation of the topic being practiced. Finally, they needed to consider the variety of types of information elicited.

Task one, writing a worksheet, required participants to create an activity to evaluate student knowledge of direct object pronouns. Eight of the nine Spanish Education majors elicited a variety of pronouns and gave students several opportunities to use that grammatical concept. Six of these participants included at least four blanks in the worksheet, thereby including four opportunities for students to practice pronouns within their five sentences. Tr. Julie and Tr. Bev also created dialogues that elicited at least three distinct direct object pronouns and required pronoun placement both before the conjugated verb and after the infinitive. For example, Tr. Julie created the following dialogue:

Marta: Has llamado la agente de viajes para confirmar los billetes de avión?

Juan: Sí, la llamé y los confirmé.

Marta: Muy bien, gracias. ¿Tienes mi pasaporte?

Juan: Sí, lo tengo. ¿Dónde está la maleta?

Marta: Creo que está en nuestra habitación. La puse allí para arreglar la ropa.

Juan: Ten prisa! El vuelo sale dentro de cuatro horas. No quiero perder el avión

Marta: Tranquilo. No vamos a perderlo!

(Marta: Have you called the travel agent to confirm the plane tickets?)

Juan: Yes, I called her and confirmed them.

Marta: Very good, thank you. Do you have my passport?

Juan: Yes, I have it. Where is the suitcase?

Marta: I think it's in our room. I put it there to arrange the clothes.

Juan: Hurry up! The flight leaves within four hours. I don't want to miss the flight.

Marta: Calm down. We aren't going to miss it!

In general, the Spanish LA majors had more difficulty providing opportunities to practice and elicit multiple pronouns. Only two of the nine Spanish LA majors focused exclusively on direct object pronouns. Others asked students to fill in blanks that required information other than direct object pronouns. For example, Mj. John includes verbs and nouns in his worksheet:

Marta: Necesitamos hacer la maleta ¿Tienes su pasaporte y los billetes?

Juan: Sí, _____ tengo, pero no puedo encontrar mi pasaporte.

Marta: ¿_____ dejas en la oficina?

Juan: No estoy seguro. No puedo recordar si lo _____ (traer) a casa después de trabajo ayer.

Marta: Buscamos en su bolso y en la mesa. ¿Puedes recordar lo que _____ (hacer) después de trabajo ayer?

Juan: Bueno, después de salir la oficina, _____ (hacer) cola por el tren y nada más.

Marta: ¡Aquí, _____ tengo, está debajo de la maleta en el piso!

(Marta: We need to pack the bag. ¿Do you have your passport and the tickets?

Juan: Yes, I have _____ but I can't find my passport.

Marta: Did you leave _____ in the office?

Juan: I'm not sure. I can't remember if I _____(to bring) it home after work yesterday.

Marta: Let's look in your bag and on the table. Can you remember what you _____(to do) after work yesterday?

Juan: Well, after leaving the office, I _____(to wait) in line for the train and that's it.

Marta: Here! I have _____, it was under the suitcase on the floor!)

Mj. John explained his choices in his reflection:

Well, I'm not really familiar with methodology for foreign language instruction but I tried to include a little of everything in the exercise. The pronouns refer back to lesson vocabulary and the verbs are both vocabulary words as well as preterite forms. I tried to keep it simple but I also didn't want to just have the blanks be for vocabulary because I think having to select a pronoun and the correct form of the preterite tense is more challenging than just referring back to a vocab list.

His reflection highlights the conscious decision not to practice solely direct object pronouns. Although Mj. John's sample is reflective of the majority of Spanish LA majors, Mj. Sally did create an activity that offered a variety of opportunities for practice and utilized various pronouns in the dialogue. She was the only Spanish LA major to do so.

Despite the differences between their abilities to create focused and appropriate tasks for students, both groups demonstrated principles of evaluation to an equal extent. More specifically, the groups similarly demonstrated an understanding of the importance for both positive and constructive feedback on student work. Mj. Angie wrote in the third task's reflection

This section was hard because I didn't want to give the students the answers, but I also don't want them to be frustrated by being constantly corrected. I tried to give them clues about their errors without telling them exactly what to change.

Likewise, Tr. Chris writes:

Although I obviously responded differently to each essay, the format I used was the same. I think when correcting a first draft it is important to start by praising them, then telling them what to work on, and then end by praising them again.

Both groups seemed to recognize the need for providing an area for improvement while simultaneously encouraging students.

Knowledge of learners

A final area in which differences between the two groups were highlighted was knowledge of learners. Within this category, three subcategories emerged: acknowledgement

of individual development, awareness of student needs and learning styles, and personal connection with students. These differences become evident when both groups were asked to provide students with feedback in Spanish on compositions. Several Spanish LA majors failed to address the students, writing impersonal comments that focused solely on grammar. Five of the nine LA majors addressed students on a personal level with the informal *tú*, while four of them impersonalized the students. Mj. Sally, for example, never personally addressed the student; instead, she used the third person:

El estudiante uso muchas verbos diferentes como ir, trabajar, cortar, visitar, ahorrar, preparar, dejar y ser.

(The student used many different verbs like to go, to work, to cut, to visit, to save, to prepare, to leave and to be.)

Mj. Felipe did not personally address the student either. Furthermore, on the student composition task he wrote in incomplete sentences and provided disjointed lists of comments, which were generally brief and did not form a cohesive body of feedback. As seen below, his comments consisted of lists and vague remarks:

Student A

-- *Intrusión del ingles en algunas palabras*

-- *Conjugacion de los verbos*

-- *Usan tercera person en vez de primera persona (Timmy) todo el tiempo*

-- *Corregir puntuación y disminuir parrafo primero.*

Un poco mas largo y mejorar las ideas.

(--Intrusion of English in some words.

--Conjugation of the verbs

--The use third person instead of first (Timmy) all the time.

--Correct punctuation and reduce the first paragraph.

A little longer and improve the ideas.)

Mj. David also wrote his comments using abbreviated words and English, although he did attempt a personal connection with the student.

Vocab – too much repetition of verbs

-- a lot of conjugation errors

Org – decent organization

-- a few random sentences thrown in the mix

Content – good

Pers. Comments – muy bien, sounds like a good break and some exciting summer plans.

I'd love to hear more about your college plans for next year!! Where in CA??

In Mj. David's reflection for this section, he explained his comments:

Show interest in the students school work as well as their life so they will feel comfortable to come to me w/ any questions about their work, concerns, or life in general.

Mj. David expressed his intention to develop a relationship with the student, but his feedback was impersonal and short, leaving room for interpretation.

In contrast to Spanish LA majors, Spanish Education majors tended to address the students as individuals by trying to connect with them on a personal level through their comments. Eight of the nine preservice teachers used the *tú* form to address the students and only one, Tr. Carmen, addressed a generic “student.” In general, they wrote in more complete sentences in Spanish and in paragraphs. For example, Tr. Bev wrote:

La palabra para “vacation/s” es “vacaciones.” Trata de organizar los eventos sobre cada tema en un parrafo, juntos. Por ejemplo, puedes hablar sobre tu trabajo en “Gardening Specialists” en una sección, y entonces seguir al próximo tema. ¿Cuáles películas viste? ¿Por qué no te gustó el fútbol? Parece que tuviste un verano muy bueno! ¿Vas a trabajar en Garden Specialists y en la universidad el próximo verano? Vas a estar muy ocupada?

(The word for “vacation” is “vacaciones.” Try to organize the events about each topic in a paragraph, together. For example, you can talk about your job at “Gardening Specialists” in one section, and then go on to the next topic. Which movies did you see? Why didn’t you like soccer? It seems like you had a very good summer. Are you going to work at Garden Specialists and at the university next summer? Are you going to be very busy?)

In her reflection for this task, she explained her comments:

By asking content questions like these, it encourages the students to write more and expand. It also lets them know that I am interested in what they wrote and that I want to know more about them.

Both Tr. Bev and Mj. David attempted similar actions. Tr. Bev, however, incorporated relationship-building comments throughout her feedback and addressed the student directly instead of referring to the student in the third person or not at all.

Although the preservice teachers’ performance on the task generally suggested a desire to connect with learners, there is one area of knowledge of learners where Spanish LA majors surpassed Spanish Education majors. The LA majors showed a greater concern for students’ affective needs than preservice teachers. For example, Mj. Lia wanted to ensure that students were enjoying themselves while learning. In one of her reflections she wrote, “I also tried to keep the passage interesting and something the students could relate to.” Furthermore, Mj. Felipe was concerned about using the right level of language for the students in the tasks. He expressed an understanding that too high a level of language can be intimidating and frustrating. In his reflection after the worksheet task he wrote, “They can also be frightened by the language.” Spanish Education majors, on the other hand, did not explicitly demonstrate that they were thinking of students’ affective needs.

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Researchers, teachers, and students have often overlooked the importance of L2 writing proficiency in teaching and in the evaluation of teaching; teachers write tests, worksheets, and comments on a weekly basis and in so doing serve as model writers for their students. This study documents the richness and depth found in writing crafted for the classroom by Spanish Education majors and Spanish LA majors alike.

L2 teacher writing expresses language ability while simultaneously revealing knowledge of teaching and learners; that is, it is a manifestation of PCK. The tasks in this study successfully show examples of how Spanish Education majors' and Spanish LA majors' PCK, as demonstrated in classroom writing tasks, can differ in three primary areas. The language awareness category included the use of the appropriate tense, age/audience appropriateness, grammatical competence, and use of the target language. Knowledge of effective teaching consisted of including opportunities to practice, variety of responses, focus on task, and assessment principles. Knowledge of learners was comprised of addressing the student and being cognizant of student affective issues. In this study, participants from the Spanish teacher education program consistently outperformed the Spanish LA majors in all areas, with the exception of affective issues.

Classroom L2 writing is a complicated construct, and the Spanish Education majors' success on the tasks in this study does not necessarily indicate a causal link between teacher education and improved performance. Teacher education is only one force exerted on emerging PCK. Spanish Education majors, for example, may have a heightened awareness of teacher writing's influence because of their career objectives or because of focused discussions in an education course in which Spanish LA majors would not have engaged. In addition to teacher education, it must also be noted that there are a myriad of influences exerted over teacher candidates and their L2 writing. For example, the act of giving and receiving feedback may be influenced by many other factors, including experiences with former high school and college L2 teachers, diverse educational school systems, and/or sociocultural factors.

These influences foster a learner's own version of PCK. Each participant in this study articulated a different stage of PCK, supporting the contention that PCK's development is thought to be continual (Cochran et al., 1993; Wing, 1993). That is, PCK is not an "all or nothing" phenomena; it develops over time under the influence of powerful forces along the path one takes to become a teacher, learning as a student through the "apprenticeship of observation" (Lortie, 1975), teacher education courses, and preservice and early career clinical experiences.

This emerging PCK system has the potential to help teacher educators better understand the stages of preservice teacher development. This study's findings reinforce that "PCK is tied directly to subject matter concepts but is much more than just subject matter knowledge" (Cochran et al., 1993, p. 264). Thus, adequate L2 proficiency is only one component of PCK. Understanding how that content is learned by preservice teachers is an essential part of teaching and is central to PCK development. The differences noted between the Spanish LA majors and teacher education majors help inform a more unified framework of teacher knowledge development within preservice L2 teacher education.

That framework of teacher knowledge should inform teacher education policy and highlight the importance of PCK development among those who are preparing to teach L2s. With the current political controversies surrounding teacher education, it is imperative to

investigate teacher education programs with data-driven studies that elucidate how teacher knowledge develops. While the evidence in this study does not irrefutably prove the influence of education courses on the teacher knowledge base, it does suggest a distinction in the development of PCK between those with education courses and those without. It would serve the profession to continue researching this complex area of teacher knowledge, particularly as teacher educators continue to have to justify their work to policymakers at the local, state, and national levels.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

There are limitations to the present study that must be considered. To begin, language teaching is concerned with language, culture, linguistics, and literature (Lafayette, 1993). The present study, however, focuses exclusively on the expression of teacher language and does not address the other competencies. Future research should highlight teachers' sociocultural competence and how it develops in regard to L2 teacher PCK development.

Furthermore, PCK develops over time from various experiences. Teacher education programs are only one force acting upon PCK, and their effects on teacher knowledge are not easily proven. It is difficult to isolate all the factors that influence PCK development. Previous experiences, observations, and beliefs, among other confounding variables, complicate the issue and limit the findings of this study.

Moreover, the fact that the students involved in the study were from the same university limits the generalizability of the findings. Lastly, it would be impossible to ascertain whether or not the participants were candid, and respondents may have felt the pressure to acquiesce to the researchers or their professors as they reflected upon what they wrote in the tasks.

The purpose of this study is to contribute to the current understanding of teacher PCK and to document how PCK is manifested in teacher writing tasks. Future research is needed to further explore not only the general development of PCK, but also its enhancement within teacher education programs and the field of language teaching. More research is also needed in L2 teacher writing and speaking, the other productive language skills.

Additionally, it would be interesting to better understand how inservice teacher PCK compares to preservice teacher PCK. Questions worthy of investigation include: How does PCK differ between beginning teachers and their more experienced colleagues? How do previous teacher education and professional development activities influence (or not influence) the development of PCK in practicing teachers? The continued exploration of PCK and its relationship to L2 teacher education merits further investigation.

NOTES

¹ The participant responses in Spanish and English are recorded verbatim with errors committed by the participants left intact. The participant responses were translated from Spanish to English by the authors and were confirmed by a native speaker of Spanish.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to extend our thanks to the anonymous reviewers for their invaluable suggestions that ultimately made this a better piece of scholarship. We also thank Kelly Conroy for her help and suggestions throughout our writing process.

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